

Fort Halifax
Winslow, Maine

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

District of Maine

Historic American Buildings Survey
Josiah T. Tubby, District Officer
537 Congress Street, Portland, Maine

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G. WINSLOW

"BLOCKHOUSE AT FORT HALIFAX"

Winslow, Kennebec County, Maine

Owner

Fort Halifax Chapter, D. A. R.

Date of Erection

1754

Architects

Two plans were used, first construction according to the plan by General John Winslow, second, alterations according to the plan by Captain William Lithgow.

Builders

General John Winslow
Captain William Lithgow

Present Condition

Only necessary repairs and replacements have been made in the blockhouse. Some of the timbers in the lower sections of the walls rotted out and have been replaced. The original plank floor of the second story remains, but the floor of the first story has been removed. It is supposed that the blockhouse was originally built on a stone foundation but a flood may have washed away the stone work as, on one side of the blockhouse, the wall has been timbered below what appears to have been originally the level of the foundation.

Number of Stories

Two

Materials of Construction

Heavy pine timbers about ten inches square were used in the construction of the building. Corners of the building were joined by dovetailing. The second story projects beyond the lower one. The building has a hip roof. Ports and windows were cut in the timber walls for the use of musketry and for lighting. The interior of the building is unfinished. Heavy wooden shutters covered the windows.

Other Existing Records

Booklet "Fort Western" by George Francis Dow, 1922
"Maine Forts" by Henry E. Dunnack, 1924
"Collections of the Maine Historical Society", Vol. 8 Article 5
by William Coold.

Additional Data

Fort Halifax was built for the purpose of offering protection from the French and Indians to the settlers whom the Plymouth Company was attempting to establish in the country along the Kennebec River. The fort was built by the Plymouth Company and garrisoned by the Province.

The blockhouse now standing at Fort Halifax is one of the few remaining which was built previous to the Revolutionary War. This blockhouse was the south flanker of the fort. The fort was located on a point of land where the Sebasticook River flows into the Kennebec River.

The blockhouse still stands in its original location. It is at the west end of the Maine Central Railroad Bridge, which spans the Sebasticook at Winslow. The railroad crosses the foundation of the large house which was built for officers' quarters and a store house.

The original plan of the fort, made by General John Winslow was never entirely completed. This plan was found to be impractical and it was decided to change it and finish the buildings and palisade according to a plan submitted by Captain William Lithgow. In changing the plan, the central blockhouse built by General Winslow became the north flanker of Captain Lithgow's plan.

Early in the year 1755, Captain Lithgow's plan for the rebuilding and finishing of the fort was accepted and the work completed the following summer.

General Winslow erected five separate buildings of the fort; the center blockhouse of his plan, two stories and the four one story buildings fronting the corners of the center building. These were used for barracks.

Captain Lithgow moved all the outside blockhouses at the corners of the original fort together to form the officers' quarters and store house which is shown in the Lithgow plan as the largest building of the fort.

Captain Lithgow also built a redoubt on the hill overlooking the fort. This was constructed of timber and was "cannon proof." From a description of the redoubt in a letter written by Captain Lithgow, the redoubt was thirty four feet square and the timber walls four feet nine inches thick. The building was two stories high with a hip roof and a watch box on the top. The redoubt was surrounded by Picquets (probably what today we would call a stockade). Captain Lithgow ordered for the redoubt, cannon which should be as long as the wall was thick.

Fort Halifax was the strongest and most extensive fortress in Maine at the time it was in use. It was the northernmost out-post of the Plymouth Company.

A condition required by the Plymouth Company in the agreement with the Provincial government was that the Provincial forces should protect the workmen building the fort. To do this, timber and materials for the fort were prepared at Fort Shirley at Frankfort (now Dresden). The materials when prepared, were made into rafts and floated up the river with the tide, but required much towing, however. Each raft had armed guards for fear of attack by the Indians, who looked upon the building of forts as aggression. Some of the Indian Chiefs, however, had agreed to the building of the forts.

The transportation of cannon to arm the blockhouses was also a difficult piece of work. These were carried in "gundaloes" which drew two feet of water. The falls where the Augusta dam is now located and the falls of Nequamkik had to be surmounted by the deeply laden boats which were towed by men wading in the shoals near the river bank.

Governor Shirley named Fort Halifax and had an inscription in Latin cut in stone, which translated means ("For the benefit of the Massachusetts Province, William Shirley her Governor, under the auspices of the most noble George Montague Dunk, Earl of Halifax, the highly distinguished friend and patron of the British Provinces throughout America, has reared this Fortress September 6, 1754.")

A corner stone placed by General Winslow in the foundation of the central blockhouse which became Captain Lithgow's north flanker when the fort was completed, is now in the State House at Augusta, Maine. The corner stone is an irregular slate stone about eighteen inches in height and bears the inscription

THIS CORNER STONE, LAID BY DIRECTION OF GOVERNOR SHIRLEY. 1754.

Eleanor E. Jannill

Approved:

Charles F. Tuttle

Date: January 25, 1937

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